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with food consumption. There is no wife in the village who does not pursue this type of activity, as it is great disgrace not to be able to let blood flow even from a chicken if a guest comes to visit her husband, or at least provide her husband or children with a 'meat dish' on festival occasions. She should also raise goats and sheep, so that in case of death in the house an 'agira'—slain animal—can be always available at the funeral.

Between husband and wife no levity of behaviour is permissible, and no obvious physical intimacy of any sort in public or in front of the children. In fact, the husband's contacts with the house are very few. It is quite common to find a child who has been asked by his mother to call father from a meeting outside saying, 'O father, they say come and speak'. This is usually a call indicating that food is ready but neither the word food nor the word mother are ever supposed to be uttered in public. The father normally quits the house immediately he finishes his meal.

During the first year of marriage the wife does not eat with her husband, partly because he is in the matrilocal residence, and partly because the wife has not yet become the mother of the children. Only then can she eat with him, but she should never confess that she has eaten before he has, for her eating afterwards is the proper procedure.

From the standpoint of sentiment, the in-law relationship is a strong and binding force, involving exchange of gifts, food and visits similar in many ways to the kinship (lineage) obligations. It is said that the wife's mother is normally very affectionate, and always fussing over her son-in-law, especially when he is in his matrilocal residence, and this attitude is usually a source of complaint and jealousy on the part of the brothers and sisters of the bride. Yet the husband's mother is traditionally harsh, difficult and fault-finding. My informant, Ali, explains the difference of the sentiment of the two mothers-in-law by saying: 'The wife's mother is all too glad to procure a husband for her daughter, and she is grateful to him for marrying her daughter; thus she favours him. The husband's mother is resentful of the fact that her son's attachment, which was solely hers before marriage, is shared with his wife.'

It is also significant that the wife never refers to, or addresses her husband by his first name, especially in public. She either refers to him as 'Son of so and so' (his father), or 'my man', or less commonly 'my husband'. She addresses him by saying 'O man'; and the same applies to her husband who refers to his wife as 'my woman' or 'people of the house' and addresses her by saying 'O girl'.[1]

[1] Concerning the absence of any demonstration of tender feeling between wife and husband, Westermarck writes, 'It is considered indecent of a man to show any affection for his wife, and it would consequently be improper to speak of it in proverbs'. He further maintains that such an absence does not mean that no such feeling exists but has to be understood in relation to the Moorish ideas of decency. *Wit and Wisdom in Morocco*, London, 1930, p. 52.

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endless friction, disputes, and uneasy relations occur. Brother is pitted against brother, father against son, mother against daughter, and so on between the various other categories of relatives. In fact, some of the popular sayings indicate that the relation between kin is pregnant with friction and discord. It is said that 'relatives are like scorpions', 'the relative's pot never reaches the boiling point' and 'who brings disasters but relatives?'. It is also indicative of the uneasy side of connections between relatives to hear that it is from the relatives more than others that one should guard against the effects of the evil eye.

The 'in-law' relationship also plays an important part in the harmony or discord that pervades a family atmosphere. Whether brothers live together as one economic unit, or whether a father 'repulses' his married son, depends to a great extent on the congeniality of the brother's wives, or the son's wife and her people. In this particular context, the conflict is usually one between the structurally sanctioned behaviour between the brothers and the new situation created by marriage and children to two different women. Thus ideally brothers should marry sisters to minimize disputes over the children or domestic affairs, and this is probably one of the reasons for the preferential marriage of cousins. In the case of a married son, the parents have priority over the wife and her people, as descent is the structural keynote to behaviour in this situation.

Indeed a great deal of friction and uneasiness in relationship is due to the fact that the individual in some situations is unable to strike a balance between the structural behaviour on one hand, and the exigencies of life and personal feelings on the other hand. A great deal of the diffused and overt aggression that is prevalent in this community is partly due to the 'bottling up' of personal and spontaneous feeling, or at least to the very limited scope for its outlet or for its direct expression in action.

A few examples of disputes, illustrating this point can be given. Two brothers were married to two sisters, and were living in one compound working together, and forming an economic unit. The wife of the younger brother died, and he remarried a girl who was unrelated to the brother's wife. Immediately intrigues and friction arose, and the two brothers had to separate. The friction cropped up again when the older brother got his daughter married to a cousin of theirs, while his brother had a boy who was considered socially more eligible because he was the girl's cousin through both father and mother. This event brought the brothers to non-speaking terms and 'Arabs' tried twice to reconcile them, but met with no success.

Another interesting case was of a father suing his son before the court and trying to denounce him as his son. The cause was the rage of the father alleging that his son had made himself a nuisance in the village by his gossip, his writing of complaints against people to the official authorities in the central government, and on top of that, he had married without the father's approval.

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its destination. Each of the two sides call out, 'The camel is ours, the camel is ours'. On this occasion, the fight took on a serious note, the camel became frightened, and some grown-ups had to intervene to prevent further developments. After the camel had safely entered the homestead, the two processions, mostly of women and boys by now, proceeded to an elevated piece of ground to let the bride and bridegroom, who were still in their separate groups, see the Nile from a distance. All then returned to the bride's house. The bridegroom with his selected friends, mostly unmarried, retired to the house built for him, while the bride stayed with her mother and other female relatives. The bridegroom remained with his friends till the morning, for according to custom he does not sleep with his wife till the fourth night.

On his first breakfast, however, the bridegroom with his friends were served, as usual, with special wheat-cakes called in the villagers' language 'kaak', with rice pudding and tea, for which the bridegroom paid a pound in return. After breakfast the 'Prince' and his associates went to kiss the hands of his father, mother and greet other relatives in his patrilineal house. This was followed by a visit to the clan's guest house, where they received pots of tea from the father's house as well as from neighbours of the family. Meanwhile the bridegroom's mother received her breakfast from her in-laws to which her answer was a visit accompanied by other women taking back the trays full of corn.

For the next two days the bridegroom was still accompanied by his selected friends, who shared his meals and remained at night with him. On the fourth night he was left alone to see his wife after dinner. Before he retired with her he had to offer her a pound as a 'placation' (ridwa) for her disrobing. On the following morning the boy brought a ram from his father's house for a special lunch to which this time only neighbours were invited; these also made gifts of money, sugar and tea, as their contributions.[1] Thus, through these elaborate procedures of exchanging food and gifts, the bridegroom establishes himself in his matrilocal residence amidst his neighbours and the new marriage is thus publicly declared and acknowledged.

At the end of the week, the bridegroom's mother with some of her friends went to visit her son's house, a ceremony called the 'treading of the house', since she actually went to see the rooms prepared for her son for the first time. The other women who were invited or who were fulfilling their obligations carried their own contribution of wheat flour, pigeons and money to be given to the bride's mother. These contributions would be considered as part of the bridegroom's provisions and measured out by the mother-in-law. The mother-in-law provided them with lunch and tea, thus marking the end of the wedding celebrations.

The end of the marriage celebrations marks the beginning of a formal avoidance between the bridegroom and his parents-in-law. Whatever

[1] This meal takes place even if the bridegroom is married to a girl living across the road.

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585 606 might have been the relations between him and them before marriage, the newly created situation makes him no longer on familiar social terms with them. Traditionally, to remove this 'avoidance' the bridegroom's family should send within the first two months of marriage a ram to the bride's family as a 'reconciliation'.[1]

This avoidance could be regarded as a recognition that, in the initial stages of marriage, much of the behaviour of the married man to the family of his spouse has to be modified and reoriented. Even if he is married to his cousin, avoidance of her parents is required as a token of respect. Adoption of new phrases in reference to his in-laws, house habits of reserve, announcing his entrance into the house, manner of dress and similar items of etiquette must be observed by the newly married groom. In other words, previous informality and intimacy are replaced by a degree of formality to show consideration for the new ties of marriage.

[591] This avoidance could also be considered as a manifestation that the husband, living in his matrilocal residence, feels uneasy and embarrassed in the home of a comparatively alien family; his ultimate home will be his patrilineal house to which he eventually takes his wife.[2] This custom also implies the psychological stresses involved in the new situation, where it is difficult to render the demands of consanguinity and affinity compatible, and where the support of the larger family unit has to be sustained for the maintenance of the newly created bonds of the individual family.[3]

Nadel explains such an avoidance in a similar manner. He maintains that in such a situation spontaneous shame and conventionalized sexual shame appear combined; for these cultural features express (and prevent) both the embarrassment between strangers (in a kinship sense) who are thrown together by marriage, and the embarrassment that springs from the awareness of the sexual occasion responsible for this new relationship.[4]

Such social procedures are implicit cultural solutions for smoothing transition from one state of life to another requiring concomitant adjustment and reorganization.

[1] Although avoidance between bridegroom and parents-in-law is still strictly observed, [108] the breaking away from it does not necessarily have to be achieved through a gift of a 'slaughter', but occurs quite often nowadays through the exigencies of everyday life after the lapse of some time.

[2] This is the ideal course to be taken, but, as mentioned earlier, other factors, e.g. lack of space in his father's house, the bride's parents' attachment to their daughter and her children, might keep the husband in his matrilocal residence for years.

[3] This explanation is based on a similar situation referred to by R. Firth, *We, the Tikopia*, p. 343. This avoidance lends itself to psycho-analytical interpretation in terms of incestuous taboo. The uneasiness in the newly created situation could also be inferred from the 'mock fight' which could be classified, according to Van Gennep, as one of the 'rites de separation', while exchange of gifts and the partaking of food would fall in the category of 'rites d'agrégation'. Cf. Van Gennep, *Les Rites de Passage*, p. 198.

[4] S. F. Nadel, *Foundations of Social Anthropology*, p. 352. The psycho-analytical interpretation for such a taboo, according to Roheim, is that in this way an attempt is made to separate the wife from the mother, genitality from orality, and infantile dependency. *Psycho-analysis and Anthropology*, p. 425.

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ADOLESCENCE, SEX AND MARRIAGE

In Artas, the Palestinian village studied by Granqvist, the uneasiness in this stage of adjustment presents itself in a different way. As marriage in Artas is in the patrilocal residence, the bride, before leaving her family, would make demands on the bridegroom's family and make sure that her family's wishes have been fulfilled, before she is placed on the camel going to her bridegroom's house.[1]

As for the bride, she now starts her seclusion in the house till she brings forth a child and is never allowed to go out and never seen by a married man, even her husband's father and her married brothers. Her main job is to attend to her husband, to receive him when he knocks at the door, and to serve food to him. One of the main difficulties of newly married girls is their adjustment to the new situation, where they must break away from their previous life and assume a responsible role. The difficulties, however, are smoothed out in the matrilocal marriage period, where the bride's mother is really the one who, behind the scenes, provides her son-in-law with his requirements. This attention of the mother to her son-in-law usually makes her unmarried sons and daughters jealous, as epitomized in the common saying referred to earlier. Under her mother's supervision and instructions, the bride comes to learn the appropriate conduct of womanhood. It is probably during this period that she receives sex information as the occasion arises. Moreover, her previous playmates do not sever their contacts with her; they still go to see her and 'have a hand dip of henna' with her; but she is not allowed to join their games or play with 'toys'. Other women, especially relatives, come to see her, give her advice and praise her 'halo' and jewellery. On the whole it seems that the girl comes under her mother's authority at this stage more than any other stage of her development. During this period of seclusion the direct influence of the mother is undoubtedly supreme, even much more than the husband. The latter, in fact, is not expected to linger in his bride's house. Except for his mealtimes, he should not remain in the house except when he comes in late at night after finishing his entertainments with his friends.

Indeed, the first year of marriage, for both the husband and wife, bristles with difficulties that may lead to divorce. According to my informant, Mahmoud, marriages are more prone to break down during the first year than at any later period. This statement seems plausible, since during the first year especially, the economic, social and psychological adjustments or maladjustments not only between the spouses, but also between their families, develop.[2] The amount of talk, gossip and vitupera-

[1] Hilma Granqvist, *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village*, Vol. II, Helsingfors, 1935, p. 72.

[2] For a well-documented discussion on the economic, social and psychological factors curbing the Moslem's nominal freedom of divorce, see Hilma Granqvist, *op. cit.*, Chapter X. According to official statistics the ratio of divorce per thousand of the population of Egypt for the five years between 1942 and 1946 was 8·3, 9·2, 9·6, 8·9, 8·1 respectively. *Pocket Census of 1948*, Govt. Press, Cairo, 1950, p. 47 (in Arabic).

THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

believe, by cutting her throat. Unfaithfulness in a wife may likewise be punished by death, sometimes death by drowning. If her paramour also is caught they may be thrown into the river or a canal together. C84

The moral standard is very much lower in some villages than others, and I have observed that villages of pure, or comparatively pure, Egyptian stock are more moral sexually, more honest, and less prone to crimes of violence than are those of mixed negro or Arab origin. 577 181 683

In any case, it is not fair to judge these peasants too harshly. Much cannot be expected of them in their present condition of ignorance, and I believe that until the women can be depended on to exercise a purer and higher influence on their society there is not much prospect of the moral tone of the village communities being raised. 181 597

In later years a woman, especially if she has sons, has an honourable position in the family. A man's love and respect for his mother is a marked characteristic among Egyptians, and even after marriage the mother retains the highest place in her son's love and respect. Some years ago I was told that if a man ill-treated his mother and did not show her the greatest honour and respect the whole village would consider him a reprobate. In the married son's household his mother reigns supreme, and the wife who does not show proper respect to her mother-in-law usually has no chance of finding favour with her husband. As an old friend of mine, a man who had always had the greatest veneration and love for his mother, once said to me, " My wife is good, and I am pleased with her, but she must remain there [pointing downward]. My mother is up there [pointing upward]. Did she not carry me here for nine months [pressing his hands on his stomach] ? Did she not endure pain to give me birth, and did she not feed me from her breast ? How could I not love her ? She is always first and above all with me. My wife may change and may lose her love for me. My mother is always the same ; her love for me cannot change." 562 593 [554] [606]

I fear I may seem to have given a very unpleasant impression in many respects of the peasants of Egypt, but I have dwelt on the darker side of the picture at some length not because there is no brighter side, nor because I am lacking in appreciation of the many excellent qualities to be found in most of my village friends. It is 114 [10]

585 The bridegroom too has made himself ready. He
[515] has had a bath in his best friend's house. His best clothes have been brought, and the *mizayen* has come to groom him and put henna on his hands. Outside a crowd of people are waiting for him to come out. At last he is ready. His men friends ring him round with candles, and a torchlight procession begins. He holds a white handkerchief over his face as if to mask himself, as they strike up songs of love and pleasure (*mawâwil*), which mingle with the sound of shots. Meanwhile the women throw pinches of salt over the men. When the family house is reached, the bridegroom's friends snatch him from the crowd and drag him in. The young bride is already waiting, surrounded by the women who have tested her virginity, and the marriage is consummated without much secrecy. In the street outside, amidst the cries of the crowd, singing and dancing goes on all night and all the next day. Coloured sweets and treacly pastries are
[262] handed round. On this day there is no thought of economy. After his marriage the young man spends a week or a fortnight without going to work, and during this time he is called "Prince" (*amîr*).

592 The household is thus begun, but for several years more
606 the couple will be dependent on the husband's family. If
554 the wife is clever, obeys her mother-in-law, and bears her
595 husband many male children, he will not take another wife. The same will happen if he is poor, and cannot afford the expenses of another wedding.

595 It is perfectly legal for a Moslem to have four wives, or
586 to divorce. But the fellah makes little use of this Koranic
178 liberty. In the last ten years a considerable decline has been noted in polygamy and divorce. The reason, according to a provincial official, is not so much the progress of civilisation as the increasing poverty of the fellaheen. Lower Egypt being richer, more bigamous marriages are recorded there than in Upper Egypt.

586 Divorce is carried out merely by repeating three times the words of repudiation (*talaq*). Nothing could be easier, but as he is obliged to pay maintenance to the divorced wife, and a new dowry to the one who takes her place, the fellah usually keeps to one wife. Other details also enter
162 into the matter. Statistics show that the country population
585 comprises almost as many men as women. For the whole